

TRIBUTE TO MR. CHRISTOPHER WESTHOFF, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLEAN WATER AGENCIES

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and pay tribute to Mr. Christopher Westhoff, Assistant City Attorney—Public Works General Counsel with the City of Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Westhoff is an environmental champion for the City of Los Angeles, the State of California, and the nation. He is an exceptional leader and public steward dedicated to the improvement of L.A.'s water quality and public health. It is my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Westhoff on being named the new President of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, NACWA.

Mr. Westhoff has been a public servant in California for almost his entire career. He began as a prosecutor with the Los Angeles City Attorney's office and has been the General Counsel to the Board of Public Works for over 15 years. Mr. Westhoff is the Public Works Department's legal counsel on wastewater and other environmental regulatory issues including air and stormwater.

Mr. Westhoff has played a leadership role in guaranteeing clean and safe water for future generations of Californians by helping ensure an upgrade of the Hyperion Treatment Plant to full secondary treatment, developing and defending policies that have helped clean up the Santa Monica Bay, and achieving 100% beneficial reuse of the city's biosolids.

His role in negotiating a landmark settlement agreement for L.A.'s collection systems resulted in benefits to all parties and led to a reduction in sewer spills of more than 70%.

Another achievement of Mr. Westhoff's of particular significance is his role in developing and defending Los Angeles' model program to increase the participation of minority and woman-run business enterprises as part of city contracts. Mr. Westhoff successfully defended this vital program before the California State Supreme Court.

Mr. Westhoff will become NACWA's president later this month, after serving as NACWA's Vice President and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. The City of Los Angeles is a founding member of the Association and Mr. Westhoff was elected to the Board of Directors in 1999.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues of the 110th Congress to please join me today in congratulating Chris Westhoff on becoming President of NACWA and for his tireless commitment to Los Angeles, our state of California and our country. With Chris Westhoff as President, NACWA will no doubt build on its reputation as the leading advocate for responsible national policies that advance clean water and a healthy environment. I am certain the association will continue to flourish under his able leadership.

EXPLAINING VOTE AGAINST H.R. 1830

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, I wish to clarify for the record my vote on June 27th in opposition to H.R. 1830, which extends the Andean Trade Preference Act until February 29, 2008.

When an issue is complex and worthy of substantial analysis, and a bill is presented to us in a format which short-circuits that analytical process and legislative debate, it is my policy to resolve any possible doubt in the direction of a "No" vote. Bringing up this bill as a suspension was inappropriate. Furthermore, the Ways and Means Committee marked up H.R. 1830 on the same day that the House considered the bill. Under such circumstances, members of the House had virtually no time to review the bill and I felt obliged to vote no.

Had the bill been reported under a rule that allowed perfecting amendments to be considered, I might have reached a different conclusion.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN AZERBAIJAN

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing a Resolution relating to human rights problems in the Republic of Azerbaijan. I am pleased to be joined by Representative THADDEUS MCCOTTER and Representative GARY ACKERMAN as original cosponsors of the Resolution.

The Resolution calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to release Farhad Aliyev and his brother, Rafiq, from detention during trial. Both of them have been detained in solitary confinement from October 2005 until today, when their trial is already in progress. It also calls on Azerbaijan to assure that their right to a fair and open trial before an independent and impartial tribunal is honored. Importantly, the resolution calls on the Azeri government to fulfill all its international obligations respecting the rule of law, including those relating to Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), among others.

Farhad Aliyev, a pro-market advocate and former government minister, was originally arrested on charges of complicity in an alleged attempted coup d'etat during the 2005 parliamentary elections. He is now facing trial on unrelated financial charges. Rafiq, the former president of the oil company Azpetrol, was arrested the same day on minor customs violations, and is being tried on similar financial charges.

The 2007 Freedom House Country Report has this to say about the rule of law in Azerbaijan: "The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient and subservient to the executive branch. Arbitrary arrest and detention are common, particularly for members of the political opposition. Detain-

ees are often held for long periods of time before trial, and their access to lawyers is restricted."

From the beginning, the arrest and trial of Farhad and Rafiq Aliyev have been marked by numerous violations of international legal norms, a view shared by independent observers, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and many human rights organizations, not to mention the U.S. State Department. The Aliyevs have been systematically denied due process and a fair and open trial, as well visitation by family, medical and international legal advisers.

As the Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and having served as an election observer in Azerbaijan, I am aware that international human rights organizations, and the U.S. State Department, have raised concerns about human rights in Azerbaijan, including lack of free elections, arbitrary arrest and detention, and imprisonment of journalists, among other issues. I am particularly concerned about the ongoing crackdown on independent journalists. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has often criticized Azerbaijan about its violations of media freedoms, noting that at present there are more journalists in jail in Azerbaijan than in any other OSCE state. This resolution calls on the Government of Azerbaijan to release these journalists from prison and to identify and prosecute those who have been attacking reporters and editors.

I am well aware of the challenges and opportunities presented by the countries in the Caucasus region. Azerbaijan is a country with vast potential and is an important economic and strategic ally of the United States. I respect the role it is playing in the war on terror. But this is all the more reason for the U.S. Congress to urge the government in Baku to comply with its international human rights commitments.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution.

REINTRODUCTION OF THE "CONTRACTORS AND FEDERAL SPENDING ACCOUNTABILITY ACT"

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, today, along with Representative TOWNS (D-NY), I reintroduce legislation, the "Contractors and Federal Spending Accountability Act," that will fortify the current federal suspension and debarment system.

The United States is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the world spending more than \$419 billion on procurement awards in FY2006 and \$440,000,000,000 on grants in FY2005.

Yet the federal government's watchdogs, the federal suspension and debarment officials, currently lack the information that they need to protect our business interests and taxpayers' dollars. We have no centralized and comprehensive government-wide method to account for the performance of our contractors and assistance participants, and those who repeatedly violate federal law may still receive millions of dollars from the federal government.

According to data from the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), since 1995, of the top fifty federal contractors based on total contract dollars received, nine have a total of twelve resolved cases totaling \$161 million in penalties paid. Additionally, those fifty contractors have paid approximately \$12 billion in fines and penalties.

"The Contractors and Federal Spending Accountability Act" establishes a centralized and comprehensive database on actions taken against federal contractors and assistance participants, requiring a description of each of these actions. This will provide debarring officials with the information that they need to protect the business interests of the United States. It places the burden of proving responsibility and subsequent eligibility for contracts or assistance on the person seeking contracts or assistance should they have been previously convicted of two exact or similar violations that constitutes a charge for debarment. Additionally, it improves and clarifies the role of the Interagency Committee on Debarments and Suspension, and requires the Administrator of General Services to report to Congress within 180 days with recommendations for creating the centralized and comprehensive federal contracting and assistance database.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, on June 28, 2007, I inadvertently failed to vote on the Stearns Amendment to H.R. 2829 (Rollcall Vote No. 604). Had I voted, I would have voted "no."

DEMOCRATIC HOUR ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, while our national crime rates have fallen over the last decade, we have seen an unprecedented explosion in our prison and jail populations. Over two million prisoners are now held in Federal and State prisons and local jails. Each year, approximately 650,000 people return to their communities following a prison or jail sentence, resulting in more than 6.7 million Americans under some form of criminal justice supervision. In large part, these people are casualties in our war against drugs.

The weight of the drive to incarcerate has fallen disproportionately on the African-American community. Although drug use and sale cuts across racial and socioeconomic lines, law enforcement strategies have targeted street-level drug dealers and users from low-income, predominately minority, urban areas. As a result, the arrest rates per 100,000 for drug offenses are 6 times higher for blacks than for whites. The rate of imprisonment for black men is more than eight-times that of white men; and over the last 10 years, the in-

carceration rate of black men has increased at 10 times that of white men.

This disproportionate rate of incarceration has created havoc in our communities. One of the most significant costs of these policies is the impact on children, the weakened ties among family members. According to the 2001 national data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 3,500,000 parents were supervised by the correctional system. Prior to incarceration, 64 percent of female prisoners and 44 percent of male prisoners in State facilities lived with their children. Obviously, the long-term generational effects of a social structure in which imprisonment is the norm and law-abiding role models are absent are difficult to measure, but undoubtedly exist.

The social and criminal justice policy decisions generated by the drug war have also resulted in massive collateral damage negatively limiting critically important access to housing, employment, public benefits, education, and political participation.

A vast infrastructure of barriers, often legislatively mandated, combine to erect seemingly insurmountable roadblocks at every turn, creating a host of proscriptions blanketed under a "one shoe fits all" regime. For example, in some States, it is impossible for an ex-felon to get a barber's license, an extreme prohibition when cutting hair is a skill that can be acquired in prison.

There is a pressing need to provide the more than 650,000 men and women who re-enter our communities from prison each year with the education and training necessary to obtain and hold onto steady jobs, undergo drug treatment, and get medical and mental health services. For that very reason, I have been active in supporting and introducing re-entry legislation for well over a decade.

As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I was pleased to join my colleague DANNY DAVIS in this Congress in supporting the Second Chance Act. The Committee passed this legislation on March 28th and we await action on the floor. This bipartisan legislation is a critical step in expanding the foundation for comprehensive re-entry programs at the Federal, State and local level.

The bill focuses on development and support of programs that provide alternatives to incarceration, expand the availability of substance abuse treatment, strengthen families and expand comprehensive re-entry services. The bill is a product of multi-year bipartisan negotiations and enjoys support from across the political spectrum.

The statistics underlying the needs of our prison population are staggering. As detailed by many researchers, these deficiencies include limited education, few job skills or experience, substance and alcohol dependency, and other health problems, including mental health. Evidence from the Department of Justice indicates that the needs of the prison population are not being met under the current system. If we allow them to return to communities with few economic opportunities, where their family and friends are often involved in crime and substance abuse, we can only expect to extend the cycle of recidivism.

For example, 57 percent of federal and 70 percent of State inmates used drugs regularly before prison, with some estimates of involvement with drugs or alcohol around the time of the offense as high as 84 percent. Further, over one-third of all jail inmates have some

physical or mental disability and 25 percent of jail inmates have been treated at some time for a mental or emotional problem.

In the face of these statistics, I believe that we can be cautiously optimistic in the support of re-entry programming through the Second Chance Act. Researchers at the Washington State Institute for Public Policy have determined that programs employing "best practices" have yielded up to 20 percent declines in re-arrest rates. Spread across the thousands of arrests each year, these practices could yield a significant decline in recidivism, with a commensurate reduction in community and victim costs.

Family-centered programs are one of the hallmarks of this legislation. Family-based treatment programs, for example, have proven results for serving the special population of female offenders and substance abusers with children. An evaluation by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of family-based treatment for substance abusing mothers and children found that at six months post treatment, 60 percent of the mothers remain alcohol and drug free, and drug related offenses declined from 28 to 7 percent.

As we move toward passage of the bill, I hope that we are not caught in the trap of attempting to solve this problem on the cheap or over-reacting to misinformation. In past Congresses, there have been objections to the cost of this bill and past re-entry initiatives.

I must point out that Section 101, the demonstration projects at the heart of the legislation, works out to less than \$200 for each of the more than 650,000 people released into the community each year. Moreover, there are no perks—Blackberries or cosmetic surgery—for ex-offenders. This bill is a truly modest measure when balanced against the more than \$60 billion each year spent on incarceration.

If we are going to continue to send more and more people to prison with longer and longer sentences, we should do as much as we reasonably can to assure that when they do return they don't go back to prison due to new crimes. The primary reason for doing so is not to benefit offenders, although it does—the primary reason for doing so is because it better assures that all of us and other members of the public will not be victims of crime due to recidivism.

COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction Act. Too many of our country's promising young men and women do not go to college because of the prohibitive cost of tuition. Many of those students who decide to attend institutions of higher education require loans to finance their education. A college education has always been expensive. But it is quickly becoming unaffordable for students and their families. Tuition rates at four-year colleges have increased by approximately 35 percent